

T h e D r . R o b e r t E . W i t t
University Fellows
P R O G R A M

Following the classical purpose of education, the production of good citizens, the University Fellows Experience strives to prepare the most able and dedicated students at the University of Alabama for remarkable lives of leadership in and service to their community, state, nation, and world.

Thomas Henry Huxley wrote, “The great end of life is not knowledge, but action.” Similarly, our mission is to shape and enable our exceptionally gifted Fellows to use the knowledge they gain for leadership and service. It is expected that throughout their lives, University Fellows will make a difference for the good, again and again.

UFE 101: Understanding Poverty

Fall 2024 | TR 2-3:15 | Lloyd Hall 328

Contact Information

Instructor: Dana Patton, PhD

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Office: Honors Hall 389

Office Hours: https://calendly.com/danapattton/meeting/15_minutes, and by appointment

Course Description

This seminar will begin developing the students’ understanding of and ability to discuss within diverse groups systemic injustices and the need for social change, as well as provide context for experience in meaningful community engagement in future semesters. Specifically, we will examine one of the most enduring social problems in the United States: poverty. Course-specific topics build from a survey of the conceptualization and measurement of poverty, as well as the demographic groups that are most likely to suffer from high poverty rates. We will review alternative explanations for poverty, focusing on the distinction between individual and structural explanations and how this distinction influences public discourse and the politics of poverty. We will explore in detail the major government programs aimed at alleviating poverty, including the major social insurance and public assistance programs, as well as health, education, and civil rights policies.

Learning Objectives

After taking this course, students should have a thorough understanding of:

- how poverty is defined and measured
- how and why poverty rates vary across different geographic locations and demographic groups
- how and why poverty rates have varied over time
- the major theoretical approaches to explaining variation in poverty rates across time, across countries, and across different demographic groups in the U.S.
- the major government programs designed to alleviate poverty, as well as what the academic literature has concluded concerning their effectiveness
- the variety of sources for detailed data on poverty and its correlates

Required Texts

- Desmond, Matthew. 2023. *Poverty, by America*. ISBN: 978-0593238714
- Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city*. ISBN: 978-0553447453
- Edin, Kathryn. 2011. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*. ISBN: 978-0520271463
- Edelman, Peter. 2017. *Not a Crime to be Poor: The Criminalization of Poverty in America*. ISBN: 978-1620975480
- Wuthnow, Robert. 2018. *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Small-Town America*. ISBN: 978-0-691-19166-9

Required Watching

We will watch some short videos as well as documentaries.

Course Policies and Requirements

Blackboard

- Blackboard (Bb) is a critical part of this course. I will post Announcements on Bb, which will also be delivered to your Crimson email account.

Email

- Please use the email listed above and not the email function in Bb.

Attendance and Participation

- There will be a sign-in sheet passed around during every class meeting. If you are unable to attend class for some reason, please let me know in advance. This is very important because some class sessions will include planned discussions with pre-arranged groupings of students.
- Participation is required. But what exactly is ‘participation’? Some students like to talk a lot in class (and life) whereas others are quieter and wait for their moment to weigh in on discussions. Participation can also take the form of active listening and showing outward signs of engagement when others are talking. If a classmate is talking, looking at that person rather than your computer screen is a way to show you are actively participating in class.
- Another form of participation in this course is contributing to on-line discussions in Bb when they are assigned. This will happen from time-to-time when I am traveling.
- Participation includes attending required WUFP events.
- Finally, regarding participation, we will be discussing difficult topics. You may feel hesitant or anxious about weighing in on some topics due to fear of being misunderstood. This is normal, but we must push through these feelings and engage in thoughtful and respectful discussions on difficult topics.

Electronic Devices

- Cell phone ringers must be turned off and phones put completely away (not on your desk, thigh, etc.). If you have a personal situation that requires you to monitor your phone, please notify me prior to the beginning of class.

Reading

- Yes, there is a lot of reading! Do the reading! Much of our class time will be spent discussing the books.

Lectures

- There will be lectures and you are encouraged to take notes. PPT slides are simply outlines or memory joggers for me for lecture.

Exams

- There will be four exams. Exam questions will be drawn from the lecture material, documentaries, and readings. Exam format is essay and short answer questions.

Policy on Missed Exams

- Notify me prior to the exam.
- If you are missing an exam due to University-approved travel, submit a note from the sponsor.
- If you are missing an exam due to illness, submit a note from a doctor.

Grading Summary

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Exam 1: | 20% |
| Exam 2: | 20% |
| Exam 3: | 20% |
| Exam 4: | 20% |
| Participation: | 20% |

Final Grade Calculation

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|---|-----|
| A+ | * | B+ | 87-89 | C+ | 77-79 | D+ | 67-69 | F | ≤59 |
| A | 93-100 | B | 83-86 | C | 73-76 | D | 63-66 | | |
| A- | 90-92 | B- | 80-82 | C- | 70-72 | D- | 60-62 | | |

*Grades of A+ are rare and only given when students meet an exceptionally high bar on all written work, exams, attendance, consistent demonstration of engagement in class and with the course material, and exhibit outstanding critical thinking skills.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change depending on course progress. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class, posted on Bb, and sent via e-mail.

Week 1: August 22

- Introduction
- Activity

Week 2: August 27 and 29

- Activity, continued on August 27
- *Poverty, by America*: Chapters 1, 2, and 3 by start of class on August 29

Week 3: September 3 and September 5

- *Poverty, by America*: Chapters 4, 5, and 6 by start of class on September 3

Week 4: September 10 and 12

- *Poverty, by America*: Chapters 7, 8, 9 and epilogue by start of class on September 10

Week 5: September 17 and 19

- *Promises*: Preface to the 2011 Edition, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 by start of class on September 17

Week 6: September 24 and 26

- *Promises*: Chapters 4, 5, 6, and Conclusion by start of class on September 24
- **Exam 1** on September 26th

Week 7: October 1 and 3

- *Evicted*: Author's Note, Prologue, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 by start of class on October 1

Week 8: October 8 and 10

- *Evicted*: Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 by start of class on October 8

Week 9: October 15 and 17

- *Evicted*: Chapters 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, Epilogue, and About this Project by start of class on October 15

Week 10: October 22 and 24

- *Not a Crime*: Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 by start of class on October 24

Week 11: October 29 and 31 (Mid-Semester Study Break October 31 – no class)

- *Not a Crime*: Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 by start of class on October 29

Week 12: November 5 and 7

- Exam 2 on November 5
- *Left Behind*: Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2 by start of class on November 7

Week 13: November 12 and 14

- *Left Behind*: Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, and Epilogue by start of class on November 12

Week 14: November 19 and 21

- Catch-up November 19
- **Exam 3** on November 21

Week 15: Thanksgiving Break

Week 16: December 3 and 5 (“Dead Week”)

- UFE 101 does not meet during dead week.
- **Exam 4** due no later than noon on Friday, December 13th. Take home exam you will submit on Blackboard.

University Policies and Resources

Controversial Topics

Some of the topics in this course may be considered controversial. One of the core purposes of a university is to discuss important topics through a scholarly lens. When members of a class find themselves feeling strongly about a topic, that is a signal that the topic is important enough to be discussed rather than avoided. Differences of opinion are expected and will result in rich discussions. In these discussions students will be expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of concepts presented in the course materials and to ground their positions in concepts and evidence relevant to the course. This in turn will entail coming to class prepared, asking relevant questions, sharing perspectives, having a willingness to listen, and practicing open-mindedness when encountering the perspectives of others. In this course we will assume the positive intentions of all class members when discussing important topics, and we will give them the benefit of the doubt when considering their perspectives and sharing our own.

Notification of Changes

The instructor will make every effort to follow the guidelines of this syllabus as listed; however, the instructor reserves the right to amend this document as the need arises. In such instances, the instructor will notify students in class and/or via email and will endeavor to provide reasonable time for students to adjust to any changes.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official [Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

Statement On Disability Accommodations

The University of Alabama is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and need reasonable accommodation(s) to participate in this class, contact the Office of Disability Services (or ODS; 205-348-4285, ods@ua.edu, Houser Hall 1000, www.ods.ua.edu) as soon as possible. If you have been approved to receive accommodations through ODS, please meet with your instructor or College designee during office hours or by appointment to review your accommodation letter and discuss how accommodations can be implemented in this course.

Severe Weather Protocol

Please refer to the Severe Weather Guidelines located on the [Office of Emergency Management website](#).

Pregnant Student Accommodations

Title IX protects against discrimination related to pregnancy or parental status. If you are pregnant and will need accommodations for this class, please review the University's FAQs on the [UAct website](#).

Religious Observances

Under the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances, students should notify the instructor in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class for religious observance. The instructor will work to provide reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities as long as that does not interfere with the academic integrity of the course. See full guidelines at [Religious Holiday Observances Guidelines](#).

UAct Statement

The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The [UAct website](#) provides extensive information on how to report or obtain assistance with a variety of issues, including issues related to dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence or other Title IX violations, illegal discrimination, harassment, hate or bias incidents, child abuse or neglect, hazing, threat assessment, retaliation, and ethical violations or fraud.

Student Resources

The University of Alabama provides resources and support for the benefit of all students. An up-to-date list of these resources is located on the [Division of Student Life website](#), which includes information regarding counseling, health and wellness, career planning, and accessibility services.